

# Deuteronomy 22:30

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*In this last case, Moses prohibited a man from marrying a woman who was formerly his father's wife and was possibly his stepmother.*

In the Hebrew text, this verse is the opening verse of chapter 23. This verse contains the last case given by Moses concerning marital purity. In this case, Moses stated that *a man shall not take his father's wife* (v. 30). This is a restatement of what the Suzerain (Ruler) God stated in the book of Leviticus, commanding the people that no one was to *uncover the nakedness of your father's wife; it is your father's nakedness* ([Leviticus 18:8](#)).

The verb translated as *take* (Heb. "lāqah") in this verse has the idea of taking someone in marriage (22:13). This command—*a man shall not take his father's wife*—gives rise to two possible scenarios. The first one assumes that the father has died or perhaps has divorced his wife; otherwise, it could have been impossible for the son to marry his father's wife. Second, the *wife* could be a widowed stepmother who could have been about the age of the son.

Regardless of the situation, Moses warned the man against marrying his father's wife because she was *his father's wife*. This was to be avoided so as to *not uncover his father's skirt*. This phrase is one of several euphemisms in Hebrew to refer to immoral sexual activity. It would bring dishonor upon the family for a son to have sexual relations with his father's wife, thus violating the commandment to *honor your father and your mother* ([Exodus 20:12](#); [Deuteronomy 5:12](#)).

In [Leviticus 18](#), a long list of twisted family incestual relationships are cited as being typical behaviors within the community of Israel. The overall picture is one of wide-spread exploitation. The foundational boundary against such destructive behavior was to carefully protect the sanctity of the marriage between husband and wife.

## **Biblical Text:**

<sup>30</sup> **A man shall not take his father's wife so that he will not uncover his father's skirt.**